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MASTER OF OPERATIONAL STUDIES

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## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** Stabilizing the Future

**Author:** Major Matthew A. Woodhead

**Thesis:** The United States should form a unified functional combatant command to conduct future stability operations.

**Discussion:** History has shown that military forces may not be suited to the operating environment and changing that reality will be a difficult process. A variety of factors to include recommendations from the Defense Science Board, doctrinal demands, and historical precedent were analyzed to support this thesis. The outcome of that analysis showed that a unified functional combatant command could simultaneously meet these recommendations and demands. The establishment of USSOCOM provided the necessary historical precedent. The benefits of such a command include an increased understanding within the operating environment as well as a potentially more effective force for executing stability operations.

**Conclusion:** A unified functional command serves the purpose of organizing diverse culture, providing advocacy, consolidating doctrine, managing subject matter expert recruitment, and developing sound campaign planning. A future force, such as United State Stability Command, can develop campaign plans with acceptable solutions and employ forces tailored to deal with the unique factors in any AOR. With this arrangement the United States gains a unique opportunity that may prevent losing the operational momentum gained by an already peerless conventional force.

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## **Preface**

Initially I believed the key to providing defeating an insurgency lie in having indigenous forces present to conduct a counterinsurgency. I studied Foreign Internal Defense and the Stability and Support Operations in an effort to prove this initial thesis. The discovery and study of two Defense Science Board reports caused me to reach in another direction. The findings of the reports seemed to point towards establishing a force focused on stability operations but the recommendations ran counter to that conclusion. The problem, as I determined it, resided not in the forces we might create but instead in the failure to build upon what already exists. Thus the idea for a United States Stability Command was born.

Acknowledgements: I would like to acknowledge the support and intellectual debate sponsored by my peers within the School of Advanced Warfighting. Also, I would like to thank my mentor, Doctor Gordon Rudd, for specific guidance for this thesis as well as other members of the faculty for their indirect support. Lastly, I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the generous support of my family, friends and most particularly my future spouse Tracy.

## INTRODUCTION

Military leadership is often accused of planning for the last war so much so that the concept has become cliché. As difficulties arise during a conflict the cliché becomes a rallying cry pointing towards military ineptness. What may be more distressing is the potential of that rallying cry being true though not in the manner the critics intended. Often the 'last war' may actually have been ignored in favor of the 'preferred war'. For the United States it is time for that trend to stop.

History reflects that not all forces are prepared for the operational environment or tasks given to them in time of war. In World War II, Field Marshal Viscount Slim took months to re-organize and re-train his forces in the seemingly mystical ability to fight in the jungle<sup>1</sup>. Philip B. Davidson, in *Vietnam at War: The History 1946-1975*, mentioned the inherent difficulty of retraining forces for counterinsurgency operations<sup>2</sup>. Both Slim and Davidson touch upon important themes: the force may not be suited to the operating environment and changing the force will be difficult. Therefore, focusing on the environment and preparing for likely activities would then seem to be possible responses to these themes.

Oddly though, books like *The Small Wars Manual* are forgotten and years of hard work via Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development (CORDs) and the Combined Action Program (CAP) are discarded for other equally important doctrine. With the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan the necessity to capture and retain the lessons of those operations remains paramount in the collective conscious of the military. But what happens when the pendulum swings back towards a more conventional slant? Will those lessons again be lost only to be reinvented in the frantic search for during a conflict some 20 or 30 years hence?

Focusing exclusively on either conventional or stability operations at the expense of the other severely limits the United States' ability to act decisively in situations that demands both types of forces. An all or nothing approach to the dilemma fails to appreciate the dynamic and complicated nature of operating environments around the world. Therefore, it would behoove the United States to take a more balanced approach to its armed forces by establishing a stability force.

The United States should form a unified functional combatant command to conduct future stability operations. In support of this thesis a variety of factors including government research recommendations, doctrinal demands, and historical precedence will be outlined. Following that discussion a case will be made for a unified functional combatant command to be established as the lead military component for stability operations. Lastly, some of the potential benefits a stabilization force could provide will illustrate one method for stabilizing the future.



## RECOMMENDATIONS, DEMAND, AND PRECEDENT

There are multiple logical directions from which to approach analyzing the dilemma surrounding the establishment of stabilization forces. One approach stems from Defense Science Board (DSB) recommendations pointing towards a unified functional combatant command as the solution. Another approach rests in the demands for a unified functional combatant command from within the Joint Planning Model framework and some doctrinal shortfalls. Lastly, a historical precedent exists for creating a unified functional combatant command to solve such problems.

The DSB exists to provide the Secretary of Defense with "independent advice and recommendations on scientific, technical, manufacturing, acquisition process, and other matters of special interest to the Department of Defense."<sup>3</sup> Though outside its apparent mandate, the Board released reports in 2004 and 2005 on stability operations in relation to the Department of Defense (DoD) capability. 2004's *Transitioning to and from Hostilities* and 2005's *Institutionalizing Stability Operations within DoD* recommended a series of actions, reforms, and organizational changes be adopted to institutionalize stability operations within DoD.

*Transitioning to and from Hostilities* offered a long range vision to better enable the transition process.<sup>4</sup> One recommendation was for DoD to focus beyond the realm of typical military thinking and into "peacetime activities, stabilization and reconstruction, and intelligence."<sup>5</sup> The second recommendation was towards "building and maintaining certain fundamental capabilities, now lacking, that are critical to success in stabilization and reconstruction."<sup>6</sup> "Stability and Reconstruction Capabilities" and "Knowledge, Understanding, and Intelligence for the 21st Century" were two of the four fundamental capabilities considered to be insufficient.<sup>7</sup> These recommendations were intended to be applied across DoD in a manner

that would less hinder future operations. In addition to providing these recommendations, the 2004 DSB report found that stability operations of some sort occur on average every 18 - 24 months.<sup>8</sup>

2005's *Institutionalizing Stability Operations within DoD*, supports the 2004 report by recommending acceleration and institutionalization of stability operations.<sup>9</sup> Among the recommendations were the following:

1. Sign Draft Directive 3000, with minor modifications if needed.
2. Establish high level and properly resourced advocates both within ODS and the Joint Staff.
3. Extend and improve our readiness system to realistically encompass stability operations, provide metrics for management and incentive for change.
4. Establish an organization to effectively exploit our 'fifth force provider' - the private sector.
5. Strengthen our abilities to communicate DoD's intentions and actions to the public in the foreign countries wherein we conduct stability operations.
6. Recruit more senior professionals into the Reserves that have requisite skills and experience for Civil Affairs.<sup>10</sup>

DoD Directive 3000.05 fulfills the first recommendation and the Secretary of the Army has been recommended as the advocate for stability operations but there appears to be little progress regarding the others.

The 2005 report seems to ignore the extent to which these recommendations, and those of the 2004 report, could be applied in the following statement:

"Further, wherever possible we have sought to maintain unity of our institutional arrangements underpinning combat operations and stability operations. The line between the two is often not clear and constantly shifting, and further we cannot afford to maintain two separate forces, one dedicated to major combat, the other to stability operations."<sup>11</sup>

The DSB apparently bases this recommendation on cost and ignores the probability of losing both the lessons of the last five years in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as blood and treasure in the future.

The DoD-wide approach initially seems appropriate but it ignores elements of Joint warfare and previous historical precedent. With regard to former, both joint and service specific

doctrines have been developed in the last few years to address stability operations. Based on review of Joint Doctrine the need for a unity of effort is quite clear. The current Joint Planning Model is separated into six phases: Shape, Deter, Seize Initiative, Dominate, Stabilize, and Civil Authority. Each of those phases contains some element of stabilization operations as seen by the figure below<sup>12</sup>:

Phase	Stabilization specific action (bold text used by author for emphasis)
Phase 0 <i>Shape</i>	<p><u>Purpose:</u> Joint and multinational operations and various interagency activities are performed to dissuade or deter potential adversaries and to assure or solidify relationships with friends and allies.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They are designed to.... <b>developing allied and friendly military capabilities</b> for self-defense.... Shape phase activities must adapt to a particular theater environment and may be executed in one theater in order to create effects and/or achieve objectives in another.</li> <li>2. Planning that supports most “shaping” requirements typically occurs in the context of day-to-day <b>security cooperation</b>, and combatant commands may incorporate Phase 0 activities and tasks into the SCP [Security Cooperation Plan].</li> </ol>
Phase I <i>Deter</i>	<p><u>Purpose:</u> The intent of this phase is to deter undesirable adversary action by demonstrating the capabilities and resolve of the joint force.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Liaison teams and coordination with other agencies assist in setting conditions for execution of subsequent phases of the campaign or operation.</li> <li>2. Many actions in the deter phase build on <b>security cooperation</b> activities from the previous phase and are conducted as part of <b>security cooperation plans and activities</b>.</li> </ol>
Phase II <i>Seize Initiative</i>	<p><u>Purpose:</u> JFCs seek to seize the initiative in combat and noncombat situations through the application of appropriate joint force capabilities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In all operations, the JFC establishes conditions for <b>stability</b> by providing immediate assistance to relieve conditions that precipitated the crisis.</li> </ol>
Phase III <i>Dominate</i>	<p><u>Purpose:</u> The dominate phase focuses on breaking the enemy’s will for organized resistance or, in noncombat situations, control of the operational environment.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Against unconventional adversaries, decisive operations are characterized by dominating and controlling the operational environment through a combination of conventional, unconventional, information, and <b>stability operations</b>.</li> <li>2. <b>Stability operations</b> are conducted as needed to ensure a smooth transition to the next phase and relieve suffering.</li> </ol>
Phase IV <i>Stabilize</i>	<p><u>Purpose:</u> The <b>stabilize</b> phase is required when there is no fully functional, legitimate civil governing authority present.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>The joint force may be required to perform limited local governance, integrating the efforts of other supporting/contributing multinational, IGO, NGO, or USG agency participants until legitimate local entities are functioning.</b></li> <li>2. This includes providing or assisting in the provision of basic services to the population.</li> <li>3. The <b>stabilize</b> phase is typically characterized by a change from sustained combat operations to <b>stability operations</b>.</li> <li>4. <b>Stability</b> operations are necessary to ensure that the threat (military and/or political) is reduced to a manageable level that can be controlled by the potential civil authority or, in noncombat situations, to ensure that the situation leading to the original crisis does not reoccur and/or its effects are mitigated.</li> </ol>
Phase V <i>Civil Authority</i>	<p><u>Purpose:</u> This phase is predominantly characterized by joint force support to legitimate civil governance in theater.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Depending upon the level of indigenous state capacity, joint force activities during phase VI may be at the behest of that authority or they may be under its direction.</li> <li>2. The goal is for the joint force to <b>enable the viability of the civil authority</b> and its provision of <b>essential services</b> to the largest number of people in the region.</li> </ol>

3. DOD policy is to <b>support</b> indigenous persons or <b>groups promoting freedom, rule of law, and an entrepreneurial economy</b> and opposing extremism and the murder of civilians.
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While stability operations permeate all aspects of a joint operation each service is allowed to address those requirements individually vice by way of a unified manner.

Further diffusion of effort appears in the Security and Stabilization Operations (SASO) doctrine itself. Responsibility for Foreign Internal Defense and Counterinsurgency, until recently, was the sole province of Special Forces. Other stabilization functions fall to Civil Affairs units or re-trained conventional forces. Currently, the stability and support missions under the rubric SASO can be organized into ten stability missions and four support missions:

Stability Operations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peace Operations</li> <li>• Foreign Internal Defense (FID)</li> <li>• Security Assistance</li> <li>• Humanitarian and Civic Assistance (HCA)</li> <li>• Support to Insurgencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to Counter-drug Operations</li> <li>• Combating Terrorism</li> <li>• Non-combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO)</li> <li>• Arms Control</li> <li>• Show of Force<sup>13</sup></li> </ul>
Support Operations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relief Operations</li> <li>• Support to WMD Incidents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to Civil Law Enforcement</li> <li>• Community Assistance</li> </ul>

A few points of interest were noted while examining the SASO doctrine. First, Support to Civil Law Enforcement was considered to be almost exclusively domestic.<sup>14</sup> This would seem to indicate a clear lack of understanding of the security requirements posed by insurgencies. Second, few forces within DoD are organized, trained, and equipped to accomplish these missions as core capabilities and instead an ad hoc approach must be applied. Third, while Special Forces and Civil Affairs units are featured prominently as the ideal forces for many of these missions distracting factors may inhibit execution. The Special Forces have seven highly specialized missions of which FID is only one<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, it is possible that the Special Forces

and Special Operations Forces may already be over-burdened in the current conflict. The recent addition of Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) and its Foreign Military Training Units would seem to indicate this. Civil Affairs suffer from overburdening also because those units have little to no force structure associated with them.<sup>16</sup> In essence they are advisors and not executors. Thus, Civil Affairs units, found mostly in the Reserves, must in turn rely upon conventional forces to enable them to execute their mission fully.

UNITAF operations in 1992 Somalia indicate another issue for consideration: planning. It was clear from comments made by commanders at all levels of the operation that a new approach to planning was necessary because of the complicated nature of the environment.<sup>17</sup> Logical Lines of Operation (LLO) were used in an infant form to address the difficult problem. However, the 2003 version of *FM 3-07 Stability and Support Operations* still uses the Warfighting Functions as a basis for planning methodology.<sup>18</sup> This lesson lost and doctrinal disconnect can be directly attributed to insufficient attention being paid towards stability operations.

The diffusion of doctrinal execution responsibility, lessons lost, and the absence of comprehensive efforts to meet the full spectrum requirements of the Joint Planning Model poses a significant problem. Perhaps the best example of the necessity for a unified effort can be illustrated by the publishing of *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency*. That it took the efforts of US Army and US Marine leadership to develop sufficient doctrine for the conventional force is the clearest indication for constant advocacy and oversight.

The final element of this analysis is the historical precedent for establishing a functional unified combatant command. In 1986, United States Special Operations Command became a reality. It was established by Congress to address a shortfall in capability within the realm of

special operations based on events during Desert One in Iran. The perceived reluctance by DoD to rectify this shortfall resulted in the Cohen--Nunn Amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act of 1986 directing USSOCOM be established as cited by Doctor Wray Johnson in his article "Whither Aviation Foreign Internal Defense".<sup>19</sup> Far from creating a new force, USSOCOM consolidated the capabilities of the various services to engender cooperation, provide budget advocacy, and ensure that recurring missions would be accomplished by forces that were properly organized, trained, and equipped.

Intellectually, creating a unified functional command for stability operations is not a novel idea. In September 2005, Major Kelly Houlgate, USMC wrote in the Naval Institute *Proceedings* about the possibility of such an organization. Houlgate's larger agenda focuses on doing away with the geographic combatant commands in favor of purely functional system<sup>20</sup>. The geographic commands are critical to fostering regional focus for intelligence and cultural efforts and removing them from the process would only hinder future stability operations.

### A CASE FOR A UNIFIED FUNCTIONAL COMBATANT COMMAND

A unified command is established to employ the forces of two or more services for a specific recurring mission.<sup>21</sup> By reviewing the laundry list of recommendations, demands, and precedent from the previous analysis the case for a unified functional combatant command is substantial. The chart below depicts a few of the potentialities of such a review:

If, stability operations...	then...
...occur every 18 - 24 months <sup>22</sup> ,	...stability operations are recurring in nature.
...require a DoD-wide solution,	...stability operations must be Joint.
...require an organization to recruit SMEs,	...a Joint Command could recruit SMEs.
...require an advocate to the JCS,	...a combatant commander could do so.
...require specialized training,	...a functional command could supervise it.
...require an unconventional cultural mindset,	...a functional command could cultivate it.
...focus beyond typical military thinking,	...a functional command could provide it.
...permeate Joint Operations,	...stability operations must be Joint.
...precedent exists for it,	...establish a unified combatant command.

If a unified functional combatant command were to be established then many of the DSB reports' solutions would be met while addressing the demands of the current operational environment. Therefore United States Stability Command (USSTACOM) is proposed to future challenges.

## **THE BENEFITS OF USSTACOM**

In concept, USSTACOM would operate in the same manner as USSOCOM. With each geographic combatant command a service headquarters would exist. For example, Stability Command Central (STACCENT) would support United States Central Command. Much like SOCCENT this headquarters would provide a nearby resource from which the Combatant Commander would draw upon during Joint Operations. Additionally, each geographic stability component would establish Joint Force Stability Component Commands (JFSTACCs) or Joint Stability Task Forces (JSTATFs) as required.

The forces that comprise USSTACOM would be drawn from all of the services in terms of personnel and some force structure. Specifically, Civil Affairs units, FID oriented elements from USSOCOM and MARSOC, potentially a refined Military Police formation, as well as engineering units are some candidates. Potentially more important is the opportunity to redefine what these units do in relation to stability operations. For example, instead of practicing Law Enforcement perhaps MPs can be re-trained to conduct Law Enforcement Instruction and Training Education. Integration of the aforementioned 'fifth service provider' would occur at the USSTACOM level so as to husband those resources until needed. In essence, USSTACOM would function as the 'service' headquarters for those civilians and be responsible for recruiting them.

The structure of the force should also be investigated thoroughly. Of paramount importance is joint interoperability. The deployable structure of USSTACOM should be capable of integrating into Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) and the Army Brigade Combat Teams (BCT) during Phase III operations. The reverse is also necessary when integrating MAGTFs and BCTs into the JFSTACC or JSTATF. If the JFSTACC or JSTAFF is the lead



element it should be capable of operating in a more robust fashion than Civil Affairs units currently do. Military Police Brigades offer a flexible structure that is designed to conduct operations across a broad spectrum. According to US Army Corps level doctrine, the MP Brigade can be broken up into detachments in a benign environment. Or it could function as the core element for a Tactical Combat Force, augmented by armor and helicopters, against Level III threats<sup>23</sup>. Translating that concept to the stability operations would mean the future stability force is capable of operating with near independence throughout the phases of the Joint Planning Model.

Another benefit of a USSTACOM would be the ability to focus, in consonance with the geographic combatant commands, on specific intelligence and cultural development opportunities. The presence of analysts devoted to studying the operational environment for regions and countries enables understanding of the conditions for stability. Knowing those conditions before an operation provides the Joint Force or geographic combatant commander with options based on vigilant study as opposed to baseless assumptions. The advantage to this approach resides in gaining and maintaining an understanding of the operational environment presented within each Area of Responsibility.

Doctrine development is currently the province of Joint Forces Command. However, there are three reasons to consider an alternative approach. First, USSTACOM would be a radical departure from conventional doctrine; a major purpose of forming it is to divorce the stabilization role from the next pendulum swing back to conventional focus. Second, the unique culture and increased integration with interagency elements provides reason enough to raise concerns of unnecessary parochial interference from existing doctrine. Finally, the departure from legacy formations may require innovative thinking along lines significantly different than

those present in established commands. Therefore, Joint Forces Command may not be the best candidate for the job because of legacy thinking and deficient expertise. Venturing forth to resolve doctrinal issues may in turn require a fresh perspective alongside that of the subject matter experts.

Regardless of JFCOM involvement, the use of Logical Lines of Operation (LLO) as presented in *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency* may be start point for developing a core planning tool. The approach taken by UNITAF and successes in Iraq and Afghanistan may be used to support this methodology. Additionally, a thorough review of all facets of stability operations must be conducted to ensure current operations are reflected in potential methods for future campaign development.

Combining the benefits listed above into an organization prepared to commence stability operations might offer broader advantages to campaign planning. Actions during Phases 0 to II may be more effective in preventing conflict. During Phase III, the end of combat operations might be met with a force capable of filling any power vacuums created in the social structure of the state. The time and resources committed during Phase IV and V may in turn be diminished.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Defense Science Board reports recommends against a separate force for stability operations. Apparently, the value of re-training, re-equipping, and potentially re-organizing conventional forces for each stabilization mission outweighs the value of remaining focused and prepared for such operations. Following the DSB recommendations means that future stability operations will remain ad hoc in both structure and thought. Under this approach the United States may continue to flounder in the initial stages of stability operations.

A unified functional command, however, serves the purpose of organizing diverse organizational cultures, providing advocacy, consolidating doctrine, managing subject matter expert recruitment, and developing sound campaign planning. A future force, such as USSTACOM, can develop campaign plans with acceptable solutions and employ forces tailored to deal with the unique factors in any AOR. With this arrangement the United States gains a unique opportunity to prevent losing the momentum gained by an already peerless conventional force.

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